AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently Amended) A mechanically welded structure comprising

a first flat and thin metallic structural element extending in a plane and delimited by a straight edge on one side, and

a second metallic structural element welded to the straight edge of the first structural element, or welded to an intermediate element connected to the straight edge and inserted between the first and second structural elements, the second structural element exerting, at at least one point of the straight edge, a force resolving into at least one component extending in the plane perpendicular[[,]] to the straight edge,

wherein the first structural element has a stress-relieving slit extending parallel to the straight edge and situated facing the point at which the force is exerted, at least one edge of the stress-relieving slit flexing to allow the stress-relieving slit to open in response to the force, the stress-relieving slit having two opposite ends, and circular holes at the two opposite ends, the circular holes having a diameter that is at least three times the width of the stress-relieving slit, and the first structural element is reinforced around the circular holes by backing plates.

2. (Previously Presented) The structure according to Claim 1, wherein the stress-relieving slit is arranged in the immediate vicinity of the straight edge.

3. (Previously Presented) The structure according to Claim 2, wherein the stress-relieving slit, when at rest, is less than 2 cm wide.

4. (Previously Presented) The structure according to Claim 1, wherein the first structural element has a shape elongated in a direction parallel to the straight edge, the first structural element having, perpendicular to the direction, a first dimension at the location of the point at which the force is exerted, the stress-relieving slit having, according to the direction, a length greater than the first dimension.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Canceled)

7. (Previously Presented) A liquefied gas transport ship which has a hull, and a cell delimited by partitions connected to the hull, and a liquefied gas storage tank arranged in the cell, at least one of the partitions of the cell being a mechanically welded structure having a wall, at least one flat and thin metallic stiffener extending in a plane and welded by a straight edge to an exterior surface of the wall opposite from the storage tank, and a piece welded to an interior surface of the wall opposite from the exterior surface, said piece exerting, at least at one point of the straight edge, a force resolving into at least one component extending in the plane, perpendicular to the straight edge, the stiffener having a stress-relieving slit extending parallel to the straight edge and situated facing the point at which the force is exerted.

8. (Previously Presented) The ship according to Claim 11, wherein the anchoring element anchors a liquefied gas containment membrane of the tank on the wall, the force applied to the stiffener being generated by the stress applied to the piece by the containment membrane.

9. (Previously Presented) The ship according to Claim 8, wherein the anchoring element is a bar extending in a plane perpendicular to the stiffener.

10. (Previously Presented) The ship according to Claim 7, wherein the wall extends in a plane perpendicular to the normal direction of movement of the ship, and the stiffener extends in a plane perpendicular to the wall.

11. (Previously Presented) The ship according to Claim 7, wherein the piece includes an anchoring element.

12. (Currently Amended) A mechanically welded structure comprising a first flat and thin metallic structural element extending in a plane and delimited by a straight edge on one side, and a second metallic structural element welded to the straight edge of the first structural element, or welded to an intermediate element connected to the straight edge and inserted between the first and second structural elements, the second structural element exerting, at least at one point of the straight edge, a force resolving into at least one component extending in the plane, perpendicular to the straight edge, the first structural element having a stress-relieving slit extending parallel to the straight edge and situated facing the point at which the force is exerted, the first structural element having a shape elongated in a direction parallel to the straight edge, the first structural element having,

perpendicular to the direction, a first dimension at the location of the point at which the force is exerted, the stress-relieving slit having, according to the direction, a length greater than the first dimension.

13. (Previously Presented) The structure according to claim 12, wherein the stress-relieving slit has two opposite ends and two circular holes at the opposite ends, the holes having a diameter that is at least three times the width of the stress-relieving slit.

14. (Previously Presented) The structure according to claim 12, wherein the stress-relieving slit is arranged in the immediate vicinity of the straight edge.

15. (Previously Presented) The structure according to claim 12, wherein the stress-relieving slit, when at rest, is less than 2 cm wide.

16. (Currently Amended) A mechanically welded structure comprising a first flat and thin metallic structural element extending in a plane and delimited by a straight edge on one side, a second metallic structural element welded to the straight edge of the first structural element, or welded to an intermediate element connected to the straight edge and inserted between the first and second structural elements, the second structural element exerting, at least at one point of the straight edge, a force resolving into at least one component extending in the plane, perpendicular to the straight edge, the first structural element having a stress-relieving slit extending parallel to the straight edge and situated facing the point at which the force is exerted, the stress-relieving slit having two opposite ends and two circular holes at the opposite ends, and ~~backing plates reinforcing~~ the first structural element is reinforced around the circular holes by backing plates.

17. (Previously Presented) The structure according to claim 16, wherein the holes have a diameter that is at least three times the width of the stress-relieving slit.

18. (Previously Presented) The structure according to claim 16, wherein the stress-relieving slit is arranged in the immediate vicinity of the straight edge.

19. (Previously Presented) The structure according to claim 16, wherein the stress-relieving slit, when at rest, is less than 2 cm wide.

20. (Currently Amended) A mechanically welded structure comprising a first flat and thin metallic structural element extending in a plane and delimited by a straight edge on

one side, a second metallic structural element welded to the straight edge of the first structural element, or welded to an intermediate element connected to the straight edge and inserted between the first and second structural elements, the second structural element exerting, at least at one point of the straight edge, a force resolving into at least one component extending in the plane, perpendicular to the straight edge, the first structural element having a stress-relieving slit extending parallel to the straight edge and situated facing the point at which the force is exerted, the first structural element having, perpendicular to the direction, a first dimension at the location of the point at which the force is exerted, the stress-relieving slit having, according to the direction, a length greater than the first dimension, the stress-relieving slit having two opposite ends and two circular holes at the opposite ends and ~~backing plates reinforcing~~ the first structural element is reinforced around the circular holes by backing plates.